
The Unemployed — Causes of the Great Demonstration: What the Workingmen Seek, and by What Means: Interviews with Prominent Members of the Organization

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Origin of the Movement.

The report of the meeting at the West Side Turner Hall Sunday afternoon [Dec. 21, 1873] came upon the American portion of the population of Chicago like lightening from a clear sky. They were entirely unprepared for anything of the kind. They knew that there was much destitution, and that many men were out of work, but there had been nothing to prepare them for this large meeting, and this demand that the city should furnish work to the unemployed, or the means of living, if it had not the work for them.

Yet it appears that the organization of this movement has been in progress for some time, beginning when the distress among the laboring classes began, and gaining strength as it increased. It has been confined thus far to those of our population who speak foreign tongues — Germans, Poles, Scandinavians, Bohemians [Czechs], etc. — and for that reason it has attracted no public attention.

Interview with Mr. Klinck.

In order to ascertain something concerning the objects of this movement, and the manner in which it was started, a reporter called upon Mr. Carl Klinck, one of the speakers at the meeting Sunday, and who is a cutler, employed in the shop of E. Melchior & Co. Mr. Klinck is also a member of the Committee of the First Section of the

Socio-Political Workingmen's Union (Sozieller Politischer Arbeiter-Verein).

The Reporter — *I have called to see if I could find out who got up the meeting you had Sunday at Vorwarts Hall.*

Mr. Klinck — It was called by a join committee, representing the Socio-Political Union, the Workingmen's Union [*Allegemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter Verein*], the Carpenters' Union, and several other societies and unions.

The Reporter — *What is it that is wanted?*

Mr. Klinck — You will find it in our platform. We want work.

The Reporter — *Not charity?*

Mr. Klinck — No; work if there is any. If not, help.

The Reporter — *What pay do you want?*

Mr. Klinck — Enough to live on.

The Reporter — *Then you do not insist on full wages?*

Mr. Klinck — No, but enough for a man to support himself and his family.

The Reporter — *But many of those out of work are mechanics — men like yourself, who are not fit for mere digging — how will they be helped?*

Mr. Klinck — They are ready to dig or do anything, so they can live. I have met such men who were ready for work.

The Reporter — *How many people do you think there are unemployed?*

Mr. Klinck — We have opened two offices where the men may go and sign their names and their houses, and how large their families are. We have now 6,000.

The Reporter — *That must be about 25,000 people.*

Mr. Klinck — Yes, I think.¹

The Reporter — *Do your people want anything besides work?*

Mr. Klinck — I do not understand.

The Reporter — *Did you hear the speech at your meeting about a distribution of surplus wealth among the laboring classes?*

Mr. Klinck — I have nothing to do with that.

The Reporter — *How strong is your organization — the Socio-Political Workingmen's Union?*

Mr. Klinck — There are three German sections, one French, one Scandinavian, and one Polish.

¹ The total population of Chicago in 1870 was just under 300,000.

The Reporter — *How many members has yours?*

Mr. Klinck — Ninety.

The Reporter — *Are they all of one trade — is it a Trade Union?*

Mr. Klinck — No, they are of all trades.

The Reporter — *When was it organized?*

Mr. Klinck — My section was started in 1868.

The Reporter — *Have you taken any part in politics?*

Mr. Klinck — We did in 1868, and shall next autumn.

The Reporter — *What do you organize for?*

Mr. Klinck — To help ourselves politically, socially, and otherwise — to meet such troubles as this one now.

The Reporter — *Is it a charitable association?*

Mr. Klinck — We help men who are out of work, if we can.

The International.

The Reporter — *Do you belong to the International?*

Mr. Klinck — Not exactly, but with have corresponded with them with a view to joining them.

The Reporter — *Who did you write to in Europe?*

Mr. Klinck — We wrote to New York, to the branch there.

The Reporter — *And they replied?*

Mr. Klinck — Yes; we have had several letters.

The Reporter — *So you have nothing to do with ideas for dividing up property, and so on?*

Mr. Klinck — No, we have nothing to do with that as a body.

The Reporter — *Who is the President of your section?*

Mr. Klinck — There is none. We have a Committee, of which I am one.

In reply to further questions, Mr. Klinck referred to the following:

An Appeal to the Workingmen of Chicago.

Fellow-Workmen:—

Since the general financial and commercial crisis has made such an irresistible sway all over the civilized countries, and has baffled the most desperate efforts of the ruling class of the day (Bourgeoisie) in administering all kinds of quack remedies in aid of the rotten condition of the social situation, in order to stop or at least mitigate the crisis — the consequences of this crisis fall in

quick succession, with full weight, upon the laboring class. You know that the whole daily press is in the service of that arch enemy of society — the capital — and merely tries to deceive public opinion on the subject of this crisis, asserting “that the worst is over.” But such is not the case — the crisis has hardly commenced, and no one knows yet where and when it will end. Hundreds of thousands of men will be thrown out of work and will be rendered homeless and penniless, and thousands of businessmen of all classes will be reduced to ruin or bankruptcy.

This crisis was predicted 25 years ago by men well acquainted with the science of political economy, who, by statistical figures on hand, pronounced its sure advent as a necessary consequence of our present corrupted social institutions and as a matter of overproduction, and they also declared that the series of crises will henceforth repeat in more and more shorter intervals. While thousands of workmen and businessmen are reduced to poverty and misery, the capital is gaining the profits, and, in concentration, assumes a still more dangerous attitude. there is but one remedy to oppose with success the damaging consequences of this fearful crisis — it consists in the energetic union and concentration of the workingmen in one solid organization. Already are the workingmen of the Old World, as well as those in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and in other places busily engaged in this direction. Should we of Chicago stand back? Is there not as great a compulsory necessity upon us here as anywhere else? Or is it that the workingmen of Chicago are inspired with less feeling of duty? Or are they possessed of less moral courage to protect themselves and their families against the worst, and to vindicate their fundamental rights? We hope they will not.

For this purpose let us join, one and all, into one solid organization! Not one stay away! Let him who fails be branded a traitor to himself, his family, and society! For by united action is the evil removed, and then it will be hardly possible that while we have overfilled magazines with the staff of life and empty tenements — that the masses should starve, freeze to death, or wander without a shelter. A number of workingmen’s societies of this city have inaugurated the first steps for a general organization, who have appointed committees for this purpose, and designated 139 West Polk Street and 68 and 70 West Lake Street as free meeting places, where committees of every nationality will be daily in session from 2 o’clock in the afternoon to 8 o’clock in the evening, where applications will be received of all men out of employment, whose names and residence will be registered into a book for that purpose. As soon as practicable thereafter the

various committees will select a committee, which will be instructed to present and urge the Common Council with the following demands:

1. Work for all who have no work and are able to work, with sufficient wages.
2. Aid in money or provisions for the suffering people, out of the Treasury.
3. All disbursements to be made by a committee appointed by workingmen, for the purpose of fair dispensation.
4. In case of insufficient cash in the Treasury the credit of the city shall be resorted to.

The City Council cannot refuse this just demand of aiding in the necessary means for upholding the life necessities of the majority of its inhabitants, so much the less as this same city voted and assumed a debt of \$13,500,000 for park purposes in the interest of a few capitalists, landholders, and professional politicians. We only ask for the necessities of life.

Workingmen! Rally! Join in the phalanx! Let your number and a strong organization be your and your family's safety! For we have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The Workingmen's Committee.

F.A. Hoffman, Jr.

In response to questions asked by a reporter yesterday, Mr. Francis A. Hoffman, Jr., who is President of the Workingmen's Association (Arbeiter Verein), and was one of the orators at the Sunday meeting, gave his views, as follows:

The persons at the meeting wanted work, and were willing to work. They were willing to work for a subsistence — anything that would keep them from starvation. They fully appreciated the fact that there had been a panic, and were prepared to govern themselves accordingly. They were willing to work at reduced rates, but they wanted work. He was surprised at the general tone of the audience. He had not anticipated that such a fine class of people would be in attendance. There were those who might be disposed to go into excesses, but there was a very fine majority that would deprecate any extreme measures. Many of them could not appreciate our form of government. They came from paternal countries where the government could, and did, give money to the people when they were in

distress. They should get something to do, and there was no denying them that.

What He Wanted.

He would suggest that the city use all the money in its possession to prosecute public improvements. He did not mean they should build the Court House, but men could be employed on the highways, and in constructing sewers. He did not think the frost would interfere very much with that kind of work. The frost had not struck very deep into the earth. In cold weather men could work better on the highways and in sewers than under the heat of summer.

He did not believe the City Government should be an insurance office, a banking institution or an institution to feed people, but the very principle of self-preservation should make it give work or money to those who were in need. Under ordinary circumstances the charitable societies were equal to the emergency, but, under extraordinary ones it was the duty of the government to come to the relief of the people. If not, there would be famine, disease, and, in consequence, and unfitness for work when spring opened. Crime would increase. The man who stole was kept in prison. At least, his life was cared for; he got enough to eat. If we took such care of the criminals, why should we not take at least as much care of those whose only crime was want of work and money? Institutions of charity were generally partial, and not even-handed in the distribution of aid. Then there was a kind of beggary about accepting relief from the which was far from pleasant. On the other hand, as members of the body politic the needy had a right to demand assistance from the government.

They Must Have Work.

He was aware that the financial condition of the city was anything but prosperous, but the authorities could issue soup, and the patriotism of the people would endorse their action. It would be a better investment to put money into public improvements than to be compelled to increase the police force. The necessities of the working classes demanded prompt action. Privation existed to a very great extent. A few might take advantage of aid from the city to do nothing, but, as a general thing, those who could get work would scorn to take aid. Perhaps there was a substratum of communism at the bottom of

the agitation. The people saw too many men getting rich unjustly, which made them distrustful of our institutions. There should be a modification of the latter, so as to make them conform more to Communistic notions. The dangerous class of the people would have no influence on the great mass, provided the city came in and helped those who were in want. He did not know exactly the number of persons out of employment, but the petition to be presented to the Mayor contained 6,000 names.² They were not going in a multitude to intimidate the Council, but to show the actual condition of things. These people had no papers to make their wants known. Not a single paper had published an announcement of the Sunday meeting. He did not know that the papers had been asked to do so. The papers vended every little stinking item about the police courts, but nothing was said about the working classes. That was not right. If anything like a riotous demonstration occurred at the City Hall, it would not emanate from those who attended the 12th Street meeting.

He hoped the city would establish lodging-houses for the homeless, soup-houses as they had in Europe for the hungry, and give clothes to those who needed them. He would admit there was some danger that men might be led to depend on the government to supply their wants, instead of their own exertions, but in the face of necessity he did not care to discuss theories. When a man was drowning, it was much better to throw him a log of wood than to deliver a dissertation on the usefulness of life preservers. The people were in danger from hunger. The city could not do better than give work to the unemployed, and give women, infants, the old and infirm, food and clothing.

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During the Day.

Anxiety at the City Hall.

Very little else than the proposed march of the workingmen to the council Chamber was talked of at the City Hall yesterday morning and afternoon. Many of the Aldermen waited on the Mayor, and

² The Mayor of Chicago was **Harvey Doolittle Colvin** (1815-1892), a member of the People's Party, a pro-liquor factional splinter from the "law and order" Republican Party promoted by *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* publisher Anton Hesing.

asked him what he intended doing, and his reply was, "The best we can." His Honor did not seem to think much of the movement at first, but he became somewhat anxious after 2 o'clock, realizing that if the crowd did visit City Hall a riotous demonstration on the part of the roughs who might attend such a concourse would provoke a general outbreak.

Superintendent Washburn had several consultations with him and was told to take every step possible to preserve the peace. Commissioner Sheridan was sent for at 3 o'clock, and, under instructions, went over to West Side to hunt up the Workingmen's Committee and try to dissuade them from bringing the mass of people to the City Hall. He was accompanied by Commissioner [C.A.] Reno and Capt. Buckley. They visited the Turner Hall on 12th Street, the enrolling place on Polk Street, and the headquarters at Nos. 68 and 70 West Lake Street, but were unable to find any of the Committee. At the latter place, they met several men who seemed to have some authority, and talked and reasoned with them about the folly of coming down on the Aldermen like an avalanche, but it was to no purpose. A few were disposed to listen to them, and to discountenance the parade; three or four, however, said it was useless to argue the point; the men had resolved to go, and nothing could stop them. This was reported to the Mayor, and he and the Finance Committee talked over the matter for nearly two hours, finally agreeing upon the program which was carried out at the Council meeting.

Negotiations of the Police Commissioners.

About 6 o'clock Commissioners Reno and Sheridan and Mr. Gillespie, the Mayor's son-in-law, took a carriage and went in search of the Laborers' Committee, for the purpose of ascertaining the feeling among those who were to join in the procession. Their object was to be prepared in time to check anything like a disorderly demonstration. The Committee was found engaged in preparing the petition to the Council, and making other necessary arrangements for the conference with that body. The Commissioners frankly explained the nature of their business, and asked if there were any indications that the procession, in whole or in part, would attempt to get up an excitement in front of the City Hall or conduct itself in an unseemly manner on the way thereto. They said they wanted truthful and definite information, so that the Police Department could get itself in readi-

ness to protect the peace of the city. The Committee assured them that the thought of creating a disturbance had never entered the minds of the workingmen, and that there need be no fear of any, nor unusual precautions taken to prevent it. What the laborers intended demanding they would demand peaceably through a committee, and no effort would be made to crowd into the Council Chamber. All that was wanted was permission to march on LaSalle and Clark Streets, there being no desire whatever to crowd Adams Street, on which the Council Chamber fronts, or to interfere in any way with the deliberations of the Aldermen. The Commissioners expressed themselves entirely satisfied with the arrangements, and retired with a promise to do all in their power to maintain peace and harmony in the evening.

The Headquarters.

One of the places of resort for the unemployed was at 139 West Polk Street. A *Tribune* reporter visited the place several times during the afternoon, but failed to find anyone in authority, or able to give any details as to what was doing. At the adjacent tavern, whither he was directed by the boy in charge of the muster-roll, he found a man who stated that during the day about 200 unemployed workingmen had called in at 139 West Polk Street, signed to roll, and expressed an intention of joining the procession. Many who came thought that the putting down of their name on the roll would at once get them work, but in this, of course, they were mistaken.

At the other place, No. 68 West Lake Street, nobody in authority was to be found.

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The Procession.

The Organization.

At an early hour last evening the workingmen from all parts of the city began to assemble on the corner of Union and Washington Streets, to take part in the grand procession to accompany the committee appointed at the mass meeting Sunday afternoon to present the resolutions passed at that meeting to the Council. At half-past 5

o'clock, when the reporter reached the rendezvous, about 5,000 people must have been assembled, and there was still a steady stream of human beings pouring in from all sides. Men were collected together in small knots, and quietly discussed the situation.

Montgomery.

While looking for something worthy of reporting the reporter heard on the southwest corner of Washington and Union Streets occasional cheers and laughter. He made for the spot, and, getting near, he saw Alderman Montgomery, who, in the midst of quite a large crowd, was delivering himself a speech. He proposed that the Exposition Building should be turned into a vast soup-house, where the poor and starving laborers could go and get a bowl of soup. An Irishman, who was attentively listening, became excited about this remark, and exclaimed, "Soup, indade! Would ye be satisfied wid soup? Ye would if there was a pint of whiskey in it." Montgomery replied that an Irishman could live on two potatoes a day. "Oh, get out of this crowd!" said the Irishman, at the same time "going for" the Alderman, who, thinking discretion the better part of valor, departed, and was not seen thereafter.

At about half-past 7 o'clock the Sozialer Arbeiter Verein (Social Workingman's Society) began arriving. There were about 200 of them, and they were preceded by two drums and two flags — an American and the red flag of their society. They also had several transparencies, the mottos on which were as follows:

One for All and All for One.
United We Stand, Divided We Fall.
Einigkeit Macht Stark (Unity Gives Strength).
Krieg dem Muessiggang (War on Idleness).
Work or Bread.
Tod der Noth (Death to Destitution).

March.

It was nearly 8 o'clock when the order to march was given. The procession marched along Desplaines to Adams, when it was found by the leaders that a body of about 200 policemen were marched

ahead of them and orders to halt were given. The policemen, not perceiving that the procession had stopped, so quiet and orderly was everything, moved east on Adams Street to the City Hall, and formed a barrier across the street to prevent the procession from passing by the Council Chamber. They then looked out for the procession, but it did not come — at least not along the street they had blockaded. The processionists, after coming to a halt on the corner of Desplaines and Adams Streets, decided to outgeneral the police, and they quietly divided in four parts, one body going over the Madison Street bridge, another over Randolph Street, and a third through Washington Street tunnel, while the fourth body waited until the others had arrived at the City Hall, and then marched over Adams Street bridge. But all the strategy availed them nothing, for they found the avenues barricaded from all sides.

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At the City Hall.

The Police Turn Out in Force.

When the Police Commissioners returned to the City Hall they were astonished to find that during their absence all the available police force of the city, including the three Captains and a half-dozen Sergeants, had been moved thither, and were occupying all sorts of positions in the vicinity. Locomotion on LaSalle Street was impeded by a squad drawn across it in double file, from the northeast to the northwest corner, and travel on Adams Street was blockaded by another double-file squad joining the first at the northwest corner. Two squads were made up in the same way at the corners of Clark and Adams Streets, and it was almost impossible for a person not known to pass at either point. Many persons who had business to transact inside the police lines were compelled to march around the Pacific Hotel and come up LaSalle Street, which was left unguarded south of Adams. The procession could have followed their example, if it so desired, and would have met with no opposition at all. In addition to the above, a squad of half a dozen was planted at the east entrance to the City Hall, on Adams Street; a squad of similar size occupied the west entrance; another squad of five or six filled the entrance to the Council Chamber, and still another kept guard at the LaSalle Street

entrance to the City Hall. The aim of all these appeared to be to keep out those who ought to be let in and admit the very persons who ought to be kept out. Several well-known gamblers and saloon-keepers, and a number of deadbeat politicians, with nothing to satisfy but their curiosity, found no difficulty whatever in passing the guards, while persons of respectability with duties to perform could scarcely get a chance to look into the halls. In addition to these squads, a force of about 100 men sat around the halls and offices of Police Headquarters, looking like so many weary soldiers enjoying a rest after a toilsome march or a vigorous skirmish. In all, there must have been 300 police officers on hand.

The Commissioners quickly decided that the sight of such an armed body would tend to create rather than quell disorder, and they summoned the General Superintendent. He informed them that he had received no positive instructions from the Mayor as to how he should act, but he believed it was generally understood by His Honor and the Aldermen, that a large force of policemen would be on hand and be available in case of an emergency. Commissioner Reno said there would be no emergency, and Commissioner Sheridan agreed with him. Both then said that, in their opinion, the appearance of the police, drawn up for the purpose of stopping the march of the procession at certain points, would be the means of inciting the workingmen to crowd through by main force. They recommended, and finally directed, that half of the policemen on the corners of Adams, Clark, and LaSalle Streets be withdrawn from sight. This was done, and a sufficient number were left behind to keep the large crowd in decent order. After a while, when it was seen that there was no possible chance for a row of any kind, the greater portion of the 300 was sent on beat. The police met with no opposition at all, except in one instance, when some drunken men in the procession advocated crowding in at the corner of Adams and Clark Streets. No attention was paid to them, however, and there was little or no trouble. The police authorities themselves must confess that they never had an easier job on their hands than the management of the demonstration. An ordinary fire would have given them double the annoyance.

Waiting for the Music.

At 7 o'clock, the streets in the vicinity of the City Hall began to show signs of more than ordinary life, and that building appeared to

be the Mecca towards which the crowds of people were bending their steps. When they got there they scarcely knew what they had come for, as there was not the slightest sign of any unusual demonstration. So they stood around in front of the building for awhile, and then those who had nickels went and bought beer with them across the way, and those that had none walked to the corners, and joined the crowds which had gone through the same routine, and were waiting for something new to turn up. In this quiet way several thousand people got together before the first installment of the procession was nearer than a mile, and there was not a loud word spoken until it arrived. As it was expected to march up either on LaSalle or Clark Streets, the corners of those thoroughfares and Adams Street were crowded, while the block between was almost deserted.

At precisely ten minutes past 8 a couple of dim transparencies were sighted at a great distance north on LaSalle Street, and the hitherto dull and listless watchers began to stir around. A rush was made for LaSalle Street, but there was no crowding, or yelling, or other unseemly behavior to speak of.

How the Procession Looked.

The procession kept steadily on, and as it drew near, it became apparent that it was one of the oddest-looking public demonstrations ever turned out on our streets. There was not the slightest attempt at order, and there were no leaders anywhere in sight except two men with flags and one man with a drum. It was so dark that a full view could not be obtained, and it is therefore impossible to adequately describe the march. It seemed, however, as if there were from three to a dozen men and boys abreast with locked arms, and that they marched diagonally up the street, one side of the procession being several yards in advance of the other. When they reached the corner of Adams Street, the crowd, expecting that they would turn down in front of the City Hall, attempted to get out of the way. The result was a horrible entanglement, in which policemen and citizens were almost inextricably mixed. Then for the first time there was hooting and yelling in abundance. The procession kept its ground despite the confusion, and pressed its way to the alley running between the Pacific Hotel and the City Hall.

Down the Alley.

At this point the men with the flags and the man with the drum took a strange notion into their heads, and they darted down the alley with loud cries. The procession went after them like a flock of sheep, and in a few minutes the alley was full to overflowing. All the windows at the rear end of the Pacific went up in an instant, and the heads of excited persons popped out, until the whole side of the building was almost black. The procession succeeded after awhile in getting out of the alley and onto Clark Street, and where it went after that it would be hard to tell.

Another flock of workingmen, that looked exactly like the first, except that it had but one flag-bearer, one transparency, and no drum, came along after awhile, and marched into obscurity, after giving utterance to a few harmless yells. In a little while, the first flock and a portion of the second got together on LaSalle Street, between Adams and Monroe, and they remained there until relieved by the report of the Committee.

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At the Common Council.

The Committee Comes.

About half-past 8 o'clock in the evening, the Committee appointed at the meeting of workingmen Sunday afternoon [Dec. 21, 1873] made their appearance in the Common Council Chamber, and took a standing position inside the railing until the Council was in readiness to receive them. When, at last, the rules had been suspended, Mr. F.A. Hoffman, Chairman of the Committee, stepped forward and spoke as follows:

Remarks of Mr. Hoffman.

Mayor of Chicago, and City Fathers:—

In compliance with the unanimous request of the Committee chosen at the mass meeting of the laborers at the Twelfth Street Turner Hall, I appear before you, and before this honorable body, to present to you a series of resolutions which they then and there adopted. I conceive it, sir, and gentlemen, not only an

honor, but a pleasure to be designated for that purpose. The series of resolutions may not altogether meet with your approval, but you will give it that consideration which is always due to the utterances of the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed. The workingmen of this city come not here as beggars. Dire necessity has brought them here. But they ask not that you feed them and clothe their nakedness without offering you a return. They will labor with their hands for a pittance sufficient merely to keep them and theirs alive. That is all they ask. They know that the case is surrounded with a great many difficulties. They appreciate as well as you do, honorable body, that the Treasury of the city is depleted; that the city is almost, as it were, a bankrupt; but yet, when city officials announce to the world that they are able and ready to satisfy the bondholders and pay them their interest, we conceive that they also will have the wisdom and the honor to devise means to feed those that are breadless, and [to house] some of those that are homeless.

It would be ill-becoming to me to offer anything — any method — by which you may relieve the necessities of the hour. I leave that to your wisdom, to your disinterestedness, to your devotion to the best interests of the City of Chicago. But I cannot, I will not cease without advertising to one fact, and that is this: that the city official should have thought it necessary to invoke the strong arm of the police in order to keep down what they supposed would be a riotous mob. Over 20,000 people are in the streets in the immediate vicinity of the City Hall, and yet everything is hushed in silence; not a single sound comes into the hall from those men, although hundreds and thousands of them are breadless and starving at this moment. The day has not yet come, at least not in this city, that crime and poverty are synonymous terms. A man may be poor, but for all that he may be a man, and recognize his duties to his fellow-citizens and to the government. He may recognize that he yet has to obey the law that is over him, and the poor have only the weapons of peace, and not the weapons of war. They are here, and they hope and believe that you will do something, and their trust will be unshaken until you shall have let their appeals go by unheard.

Slandrous tongues have propagated all sorts of rumors, but I trust that our conduct — the conduct of these men — will show to you here tonight, as they did to those that participated in the great mass meeting, the greatest concourse that ever came together in the city of Chicago, that they are an orderly set of men, that they have so far earned their living by hard work, and intend to do so in the future. In the name of this Committee, in the name of thousands of poor, of men, of women, and of children, I thank

you for your attention, and leave it to your judgment and to your mercy the consideration of this subject. (*Applause.*)

The Workingmen's Propositions.

The subjoined propositions, adopted by the workingmen, were then sent to the Clerk, who read them to the Council:

At a meeting of workingmen assembled at Turner Hall on West Twelfth Street, Dec. 21 [1873], the following resolutions were presented and unanimously adopted, and a committee of workingmen were appointed to present the same to you and solicit your wisest consideration:

Whereas, In consequence of the existing financial and commercial crisis and the general want of employment which has manifested itself, we find ourselves without the necessities of life, and claiming, as we do, the right to live, we are compelled to address to the Mayor and Common Council of the city of Chicago for the means of obtaining the most necessary means of subsistence, and therefore most respectfully submit to the authorities the following propositions for the relief of our present distressed condition:

1. Work for all those unemployed who are willing and able to work at the rate of eight hours a day, with sufficient wages.

2. Advances either in money or provisions for those to whom no immediate employment can be given who are without the necessary means of living.

3. The distribution of the advances shall be superintended by a committee chosen by the working classes, for the purpose that aid be given only to really needy and deserving persons.

4. In case the funds in the city are insufficient the city credit to be resorted to for the purpose of obtaining a loan.

We confidently trust and expect that the City Government will give due consideration to our just demands for the immediate relief of our distressed circumstances, as we are unable to endure the hardships any longer.

How to Dispose of the Resolutions.

Ald. [Timothy M.] Cullerton moved the reference of the resolutions to the Finance Committee, and that the Mayor be added thereto.

Ald. [James J.] McGrath moved that the Special Committee of Nine be added. The motion prevailed.

Ald. [Louis] Schaffner stated, for the benefit of the representatives of the workingmen, the action previously taken by the Council in reference to the funds in the hands of the Relief Society. He added that it was well known that the Constitution prevented the city from loaning its credit. There was a willingness to give all possible relief, but impossible things should not be asked, and incendiary speeches should not be made.

Ald. McGrath thought the proper way to dispose of the resolutions was to refer them to a special committee of the Council, to meet with their Committee, and do something to relieve the wants the workingmen complained of. After a proper disposition was shown, they would be satisfied. The principle reason of the presence of the police force was the fact that the building was considered unsafe for the presence of a large crowd of people. The Council was not prepared to say what was best to be done in the matter of the workingmen, but a proper action could be arrived at by conference.

The Mayor stated that the conference between the Common Council and the Workingmen's Committee would be held Tuesday [Dec. 23, 1873] at 2 o'clock pm.

Address of Mayor Colvin.

Mayor Colvin then addressed the Workingmen's Committee as follows:

Gentlemen of the Workingmen's Committee:—

I desire to make a few remarks to you in regard to my own position, and the position of the city. It is well known to you all that I came into office about the 1st of December. When I took charge, there were no persons to assist me, except those who had served under the old administration. I was a mere figurehead for two or three weeks; no one that I appointed had been confirmed, and I knew nothing of the condition of the people of our city, further than from general information. I had no knowledge that a large portion of the people were in the condition in which they are represented to be. I knew that work had fallen off very much, because that was my own business, and that the services of men must necessarily be dispensed with. No businessman can employ workmen when he has nothing for them to do.

My attention was not called to the condition of the laboring classes until last Saturday [Dec. 20, 1873], when I heard there was to be a meeting, but looked upon it as an ordinary assemblage. Had I known Sunday that there was to be such a number of our citizens congregated at Turner Hall for the purpose for which they were gathered together, I assure you, gentlemen, I should certainly have been there myself. I should have felt it my duty to go, at least to listen to what was said, for I have no doubt that many of them were my political friends (*applause*), and I should have esteemed it a great privilege to be present and perhaps to add to what was said by others in the way of sympathy for them. I wish to assure you and our friends, for I do not look upon them as other than friends, that I agree with you that something ought to be done, and that my efforts shall not cease until something is done in behalf of those whom you represent here tonight. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Hoffman.

Mr. Hoffman replied as follows:

I thank you for the remarks you have uttered. Being the highest official in this great metropolis, they are words that give us great consolation. We are also assured that the Council will aid and abet you in your efforts. I say again that we have not come here in these great numbers for the purpose of intimidating you, or extorting by threats what we could not otherwise make you concede, but to give you in the flesh the living presence of the sorrow that is upon us. That is the only reason.

We have no press to announce to the people of this city our suffering, and some of the morning papers have not a word to say in regard to that great meeting — probably the greatest ever held in the City of Chicago — while their columns were filled with little items. I say we could not tell yesterday what the papers would say in regard to our meeting, and therefore we determined to be present here ourselves, that you might know the suffering that we have undergone.

Address of Mayor Colvin.

Ald. [C.L.] Woodman stated that he had facilities in the bakery with which he was connected for baking 10,000 more loaves of bread per day than they were now baking, and he wished to say to the Council that he would, for the next 60 days, bake 10,000 loaves daily

for the mere cost of the flour and manufacture. This generous offer elicited loud applause, and the Committee of Workingmen thereupon retired.

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Outside.

Waiting for the Verdict.

During the absence of the Committee the members of the procession enlivened the scene with cries of a miscellaneous character, but were otherwise well-behaved. A drunken young man with an astonishing plenitude of white shirt front and a lighted cigar, attempted several times to address them from the steps of the Schlosser Building, but he was hooted down with cheerful promptness every time he opened his mouth, and after a while he subsided altogether. From what could be learned, it appears that the young man wanted to make some incendiary remarks about raiding the Council Chamber, and the workingmen are deserving of praise for shutting him up.

A man named Henry Lincoln managed to get a hearing until supplanted by Mr. Hoffman. He indulged in considerable "swash" about his former and present positions in life, and gave the crowd to understand that he did not forget that he once had to work for a living in New England. He also said he was opposed to exempting churches from taxation when people were starving for the necessities of life. There appeared to be a disposition on the part of Mr. Lincoln to exempt the people from the churches, as he said there was no God but Humanity. His remarks, as a general thing, did not meet with much favor.

Report of the Committee.

Mr. Michowslinski, one of the Committee, then mounted the steps and said that they had succeeded excellently well at the Council Chamber, and Mr. F.A. Hoffman, their spokesman before that body, would explain to them what was done.

Mr. Hoffman was received amid tremendous applause by his fellow workingmen. After the tumult had subsided, he began by saying that he was desirous of reporting to them how he and the rest of the

Committee were received by the Council and the Mayor. That body had given them excellent assurances, and they could go home to their wives, children, sweethearts, fathers, and mothers, and bring them the glad tidings that help was near at hand. The Council had promised them that they were ready to receive their Committee at any time. He had presented the Council the resolutions passed by the largest gathering ever assembled in Chicago, and he would assure them on the honor of a man, that he would not leave the committee rooms of the Council until they had received their rights. Dire necessity had united them into a grand brotherhood, and the solid mass of humanity before him showed that they were in earnest in regard to this matter. They were not beggars, and did not come as such. All that they asked for was work until next spring, when they could again look out for themselves and their families.

Alderman Woodman, in the Council, had promised to furnish all the bread wanted for the next six months, and the city could pay him when it had the money. (*Great applause, and three cheers for Woodman. A voice: "We'll give him [Anton] Hesing's place if he keeps on."*) The Mayor had also said that if he had known of the meeting he would have been present himself and addressed them. Their action last night showed best what kind of men they were. They were laborers of peace and not of strife.

Mr. Hoffman then went into an elaborate and eloquent defense of himself. He said the press had calumniated him because he had taken sides with the laborers. In casting his lot with them, he was actuated by no improper or impure motives. What he had done was out of pure sympathy for the poor, downtrodden laborer — out of pure philanthropy. He was not aspiring for political honors, nor would he allow them to make him a political candidate for office; his sole desire is to purify the ballot box and elect good and honest men to office.³

Adjournment.

After the conclusion of Mr. Hoffman's speech, the immense crowd of workingmen, who at one time must have numbered at least 10,000, quietly left and peacefully wended their way to their homes, perfectly satisfied that the city authorities would do for them all that

³ This promise proved short-lived, as F.A. Hoffman, Jr. headed the ticket as nominee of the Workingmen's Party of Illinois for Congress in the November 1874 election.

was possible and that in this great, noble, and charitable city there was no need of riots and disturbances, and, no matter how great the destitution might be, Chicago would always be found equal to the emergency.

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What Relief is Now Afforded.

The County Agent.

The County Agent was visited yesterday, and reported the following facts:

On the 1st day of December 1873, the books shoed that 3,026 families, or 11,726 persons, were receiving relief. Yesterday the books showed that 4,140 families, or 16,040 persons, were being relieved; and that in three weeks the increase had been 1,114 families, or 4,317 persons. For the corresponding date last year 2,500 families, or 9,687 persons, were on the books. The highest number previous to yesterday was 4,500, on March 1, 1873, when they were rapidly disposed of.

The Relief and Aid Society.

The office of the Relief and Aid Society was visited, and the following information was obtained from Mr. Truesdell, the Superintendent:

There are about 4,000 families on the books of the Society, and \$1,000 in money and from 30 to 50 tons of coal are daily distributed among the most needy of them. The number of new applicants daily is about 300, of whom one-third are found to be in want. Mr. Truesdell is of the opinion that if there were no such institution as the Relief and Aid Society there would not be more than one-third the number now on the books in need of the necessities of life. He is convinced that a great many of the able-bodied men who are loafing about the streets could get something to do if they were not too lazy to look for it.

The German Aid Society.

Mr. Enders, Superintendent of the German Aid Society, informed the reporter that he was paying out about \$100 a day in relief, and had 300 families or thereabouts to look after. The Society performed a great deal of charitable work of which a detailed account could not very well be given, but in a short time a statement will be published showing the entire workings of the Society. Mr. Enders seems to think it will be a flattering exhibit, considering the short time the organization has been in existence.

Comments of the *Staats-Zeitung*.

The *Staats-Zeitung* comments on the meeting Sunday night as follows:

That which was demanded in the meeting was work or money from the city for laborers who are without work and who are in distress. The need for aid has never been denied, and the columns of all the papers, and especially of the *Staats-Zeitung*, have shown for weeks that this necessity was generally recognized. Thus the people are to be pardoned if they cry out for help.

But those demagogues and agitators who are trying to make capital for themselves out of a devilry which threatens the whole community cannot be too severely condemned. The laborers shall and must be helped, and Mayor Colvin dwelt on this point urgently and warmly in his inaugural message. How to help them is a question demanding careful consideration. But the dangerous remedy which the speakers, with Francis A. Hoffman at their head, proposed yesterday, is the false one, and will bring about a result just contrary to what is desired. The city, robbed by Gage, has no money at this moment. The season of the year makes public works impossible. The city itself is a beggar, poorer than the poorest workingman.

Everyone knows this, and it is to be expected that the common sense of the people will, after deliberate consideration, reject those who wish to lead them astray. The time will come when Francis A. Hoffman and his associates will be thoroughly ashamed of what they did yesterday.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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